



February 2006

Doctor of Philosophy in Public Policy and Management University of Washington

Introduction

The University of Washington is seeking Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) approval to offer a Doctor of Philosophy in Public Policy and Management. The program, to be offered by the Daniel J. Evans School of Public Affairs, would prepare students to engage in the social and natural sciences in formulating policy options and addressing challenges, as well as assessing the consequences of public policy solutions. If approved, the program would begin in fall 2006.

Relationship to Institutional Role and Mission and the Strategic Master Plan

The program would draw on the strength of the existing Masters in Public Administration (MPA) and enhance the Evans school's already strong public policy research capacity. With an emphasis on public service and policy research aimed at problems that are directly relevant to society and government, the Ph.D. in Public Policy and Management would contribute to the mission of the University of Washington through service to the state and the nation.

Program goals are consistent with the statewide strategic master plan goals of providing opportunities for students to earn degrees and responding to the state's economic needs. The program would be the first in Washington (and one of fewer than 60 nationally) to offer students the opportunity to earn a doctorate in Public Policy and Management. The Evans school contributes to the state's economy through faculty research, external grant funding, and the contributions of Evans school graduates.

Program Need

The Ph.D. proposal is a response to needs expressed by students, employers, and community stakeholders. The state and regional needs assessment finds that the state produces fewer professional and doctorate degrees than are required to meet the needs of Washington employers.

Student demand for the program was assessed based upon inquiries received by the Evans school. Over the past year, the school has received more than 50 inquiries from students interested in applying to the program. In addition, directors of public affairs doctorate programs around the country report that they have far more applicants than can be accommodated with existing programs.

Employer demand for graduates with a Ph.D. in Public Policy is strong and growing. Growth in demand for graduates is expected to continue, due to increasing enrollments in MPA programs around the country and the anticipated retirement of a large portion of the current faculty cohort. In addition, the hiring preferences of departments are changing. With the maturing of public policy as a field of study, programs are increasingly interested in hiring new faculty with the broader interdisciplinary training provided in a public policy program rather than discipline-specific specialists. Directors of public policy programs, including the Evans school, have reported difficulty in hiring faculty with the preferred qualifications.

While a majority of graduates would be expected to seek an academic post following graduation, there are a number of opportunities for graduates in research institutions, government agencies, and in the private sector as well. According to a survey of doctorate recipients conducted by the National Research Council, the unemployment rate for Ph.D.s in political and related sciences was only 1.4 percent in 2001 (the most recent year for which information is available).

The program would serve the community by training leaders for public service positions in government, non-profit organizations, and a variety of other endeavors. In addition, the Ph.D. program would focus primarily on training the next generation of faculty, but also would contribute to the community by strengthening research programs at the Evans school – with a special emphasis on service-oriented research projects.

The proposed program would be the first Doctorate in Public Policy to be offered in Washington, and one of fewer than 60 nationally.

Program Description

The primary focus of the program would be to prepare graduates for faculty positions in public policy. As a result, the program is designed to foster the skills necessary to successfully compete for and retain positions in academia. The program would offer students the opportunity to connect with faculty on research projects and through mentoring arrangements. In addition, students would be expected to teach courses while in the program. The department would commit to supporting each student with a teaching or research assistant position during the first three years of the program. Currently, the Evans school employs more than 40 teaching assistants and research assistants; many of these positions are held by current MPA students, while others are held by Ph.D. students in other departments. While the department hopes to continue to expand the number of teaching and research positions offered, the program does anticipate that some of these positions would be shifted to students in the proposed Ph.D. program over time.

Students admitted to the program would, in most cases, have completed a master's in public affairs or a related field. Students would be expected to present strong math and analytical skills, as well as having completed coursework in calculus, statistics, and/or economics. In addition, applicants would be expected to demonstrate excellent oral and written communication skills during the admissions process.

Students would complete a minimum of 90 quarter credits (60 semester credits) and would typically complete their degree program within five years. The curriculum is broken down into three phases. During the first phase of the curriculum, students would engage in a set of core courses that follow two streams. The first would be foundational work in public policy and management theory, and the second would focus on research design and methods. At the end of the first year of study, students would take a qualifying exam to assess their readiness to move forward in the program.

In the second phase of the program, students would develop specializations in theory, methods, a specific discipline, and a substantive policy area. Upon successful completion of a second-year assessment – comprised of written and oral exams – students would proceed to their general exam. After successful presentation of the general exam, students would advance to candidacy status and, thus, enter the third phase of the program; in which they would form a dissertation reading committee, prepare a dissertation, and complete a final examination.

In the first year, the program would accommodate 4 FTE students – growing to approximately 18 FTE students at full enrollment in the fifth year. Some of the courses would be open to Ph.D. students in other programs, as well as advanced MPA students. In addition, the program would draw on a number of existing courses offered in the Evans school and in other programs as part of the core curriculum. Course-sharing arrangements are in place with sociology, political science, and urban design and planning.

The program would draw on 28 faculty in the Evans school, providing depth and breadth of experience. All of the core courses have at least two regular faculty who teach the course on a regular basis.

As indicated above, students would be assessed throughout the program. In addition to the typical assessment within individual courses, students would be assessed across the curriculum in each phase of the program. One aspect that is perhaps unique in doctorate programs, and applauded by one of the reviewers, is the comprehensive first-year assessment that students would take following completion of their core coursework and prior to their specialization. In the second phase of the program, students would be assessed again, across both the core and their specialization areas. Finally, students' readiness for the dissertation would be assessed with the general exam and, of course, students would sit for a final examination upon completion of the dissertation.

The program would be assessed through a variety of approaches as well. First, the program would track its success through the successes of its students. Measures would include

completion and placement rates and graduate productivity in terms of publications. Students would also complete course evaluations and participate in exit interviews to provide feedback on the program.

Faculty participation in the Ph.D. program would be evaluated through teaching assignments and dissertation committee assignments. Also, the program would track collaboration between students and faculty – including research seminars and collaborative publications.

Finally, the program would request an external review of the program and outcomes.

Diversity

The Evans school is proud of its success in attracting a diverse student body to the current MPA program. About 18 to 20 percent of the students in the MPA program are students of color, which is about equal to the overall percentage of Washington residents holding bachelor's degrees. However, the school is not content with these results and is actively pursuing a number of strategies to improve program diversity. Strategies include a concerted effort – which has met with some success – to recruit and retain faculty of color. In addition, the admissions director and admissions recruiter share a commitment to improving diversity and have developed targeted recruitment strategies to attract students. The program also has significantly added to the financial aid offered to students to ensure that students are able to afford to attend the program.

External Review

The program was reviewed by two external experts: Astrid Merget, dean and professor at the School of Public and Environmental Affairs at Indiana University, and Brinton Milward, McClelland professor and director at the School of Public Administration and Policy at The University of Arizona. Both reviewers expressed support for the program and cited the shortage of qualified new faculty.

Merget endorsed the program with enthusiastic support, citing a number of strengths in the current MPA program and maintaining that those strengths position it well to mount a high-quality Ph.D. program. Merget indicated that the proposed curriculum is consistent with that of the leading programs nationally. In addition, she stressed the need for such a program to respond to the shortage of qualified new faculty; a shortage that is expected to worsen as current faculty retire. Merget did raise concern over the size of the program, suggesting that a cohort of only 4 FTE students may be too small. She also suggested that the administrative needs of the program may grow over time, requiring a larger share of the director's time than indicated in the proposal.

Milward indicated that the proposal made a strong case for the addition of this degree program and that it would have national as well as regional appeal. He cited the shortage of qualified

Ph.D.s to fill academic positions in the coming years, and suggested that graduates would be well positioned to compete for academic appointments at the top universities. In addition, Milward suggested that graduates of the Ph.D. program would have opportunities in “think tanks” and research institutes.

Program Costs

The costs outlined for the program would be met through reallocation of funds and new state funds, grants, contracts, and fee-based programs. The program would enroll 4 FTE students in the first year, growing to 18 FTE students by the fifth year of the program. The program would draw on existing faculty expertise. Program costs are estimated, based on faculty time equivalent to 1.4 full-time faculty positions. Administrative costs are based on a .2 FTE program chair and a .5 FTE administrative support position.

No capital improvements are required for program implementation.

Estimated costs provided in the proposal include the cost of the TA/RA positions. Because those costs would be passed on to whichever program employs the student, that cost is subtracted for the purposes of this discussion. In the first year of the program, costs are estimated to be \$49,825 per FTE – with a cost of \$18,183 per FTE at full enrollment in year five. Due to data limitations, the annual HECB cost study does not break out the cost of Ph.D. programs from other graduate programs, so while the proposed program would be delivered at a higher-than-average cost compared to other social science graduate enrollments, the cost does appear to be reasonable.

Staff Analysis

The proposed program would support the unique role and mission of the institution by providing students with an opportunity to earn a degree that connects with the research and public service missions of the university and the Evans School of Public Affairs.

The program also responds to the strategic master plan’s goals of providing opportunities for students to earn degrees and responding to the economic needs of the state. The proposal also responds to the needs and desires of students.

The program draws on an experienced and well-qualified faculty and would serve to enhance current and future research programs. The proposal also lays out a rigorous student assessment approach that would ensure quality by providing ample feedback to students. The proposed program assessment approach is comprehensive and includes feedback from a variety of sources, including an external review of the program and outcomes.

The program responds to demonstrated student, employer, and community needs; consistent with the state and regional needs assessment and the institution's own assessment of need.

Drawing on existing structures and relationships established in the current MPA program, the proposal outlines a strategy for recruiting a diverse student body, with a goal of continuing improvement over time.

The program would not unnecessarily duplicate existing programs and would be offered at a reasonable cost.

Recommendation

Based on careful review of the program proposal and supplemental sources, HECB staff recommend approval of the Doctor of Philosophy in Public Policy and Management at the University of Washington.

RESOLUTION NO. 06-05

WHEREAS, The University of Washington proposes to offer a Doctor of Philosophy in Public Policy and Management; and

WHEREAS, The program would support the unique role and mission of the institution by providing students with an opportunity to earn a degree that connects with the research and public service missions of the university; and

WHEREAS, The program would respond to demonstrated student, employer, and community needs, consistent with the state and regional needs assessment and the institution's own assessment of need; and

WHEREAS, The recruitment and diversity plan is well defined and builds upon an existing and successful infrastructure in the Evans School of Public Affairs; and

WHEREAS, The program has undergone an extensive development and review process and has received support from external experts; and

WHEREAS, The costs are reasonable;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the Higher Education Coordinating Board approves the Doctor of Philosophy in Public Policy and Management at the University of Washington.

Adopted:

February 23, 2006

Attest:

Gene J. Colin, Chair

Jesus Hernandez, Secretary